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## Future teachers' readiness to work in inclusive education through educational activities

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### Abstract

The authors of the article substantiate the relevance of finding resources for development of future teachers' psychological readiness to work in inclusive education. The study is aimed at identification of extra-curricular activities at the University, contributing to the development of students' psychological readiness to work in inclusive education, and their influence on the development of future teachers' positive attitudes towards inclusive education, tolerance and personal creativity. Experimental verification was conducted based on the analysis of the scientific and pedagogical potential presented in foreign and domestic studies.

The study assumed that extracurricular educational activities in higher education institutions are a powerful resource for developing the future teacher's psychological readiness to work in inclusive education when:

- extracurricular educational activity is seen as an interaction of teachers and students outside of the educational process which forms the student's personality;
- a variety of forms and means in extracurricular educational activities is used at the university;
- the educational process is updated in compliance with the current trends of pedagogical science in the field of inclusive education;
- students' social and pedagogical infrastructure is expanded through educational institutions of the city, region, country participation in the inclusive environment;
- the educational potential of art and students' artistic abilities and creativity are applied, works of art appropriate for education are included into extracurricular educational activities.

*Keywords:* educational activities, psychological readiness, inclusive education, a future teacher.

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## **Introduction**

The development of future teachers' psychological readiness to work in inclusive education is one of modern professional education strategic objectives. The domestic and foreign studies related to inclusive education approaches and methods prove that non-isolated learning is advantageous for all pupils. The importance of including all pupils into the educational process, the need to master and apply inclusive technologies for targeted work with children is emphasized in the Russian Federation regulatory documents, particularly in the Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation" (Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, 2012).

Extracurricular educational activity at the university is an essential component of students' professional and pedagogical training. This activity is aimed at special relationship between all participants of the educational process (a teacher, a student, pupils, parents); it brings a future teacher to treat a student as a self-valuable person and to organize the educational process based on his or her initial capabilities; to perceive inclusive practice positively.

## **Purpose and objectives of the study**

The purpose of this study is to identify extra-curricular activities forms, means and directions at the University, contributing to the development of students' psychological readiness to work in inclusive education, and to experimentally verify their influence on the development of future teachers' positive attitude towards inclusive education, tolerance, and personal creativity.

The object of the study is extracurricular educational activity in higher education aimed at future teachers' psychological readiness to work in inclusive education.

## **Literature review**

In our research we draw attention to the works devoted to the problem of teachers' readiness to work in inclusive education by foreign and Russian scientists. Foreign teachers' studies are devoted to:

- the attitude of teachers to inclusive education and the impact of this attitude on the success of co-education (De Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011; Krischler, Powell, & Pit-Ten Cate, 2019);
- teachers' perception of inclusive education (Hunter-Johnson, Newton & Cambridge-Johnson, 2016);

- teachers' professional competence level and their attitude to inclusion, taking into account students' special educational needs in the learning process and students' disability types (Schmidt & Čágran, 2011; Hande, Burcu & Mertz, 2020);
- pre-service teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education (Bukamal, 2018).

Domestic teachers are not only interested in their foreign colleagues' research and experience of inclusive education (Melnik, 2013), they actively study such issues as:

- teacher's professional readiness to work in inclusive education (Ahmetova, 2013);
- teachers' and future teachers' psychological readiness to work in inclusive education (Alehina, 2012);
- readiness of all the participants of the educational process to work in inclusive education (Kuznetsova, 2011).

Much attention in national pedagogy is paid to the issues related to the justification of approaches, in particular the competency-based one, content and conditions of future teachers training and teachers retraining for professional activities in inclusive education, in particular, issues related to bachelors' readiness for correctional and pedagogical activities in inclusive education (Goneev, 2016); the study of issues of inclusive primary general education staffing and possible ways to solve them (Solovyova, 2018).

Extracurricular educational activities issues are also widely presented in domestic and foreign studies. Researchers pay special attention to the study of:

- students' attitudes to extracurricular activities (Belikova, 2002; Greenbank, 2015);
- relationships between extracurricular activities and academic outcomes (Chan, 2016; Pinto & Ramalheira, 2017);
- extracurricular activities at the university impact on the graduates' employment (Thompson, Clark, Walker, & Whyatt, 2013);
- means of students' involvement in extracurricular activities (Ooi, 2020);
- the impact of extracurricular activities on the development of professional skills (Hund & Bueno, 2015; Nurullina, Erofeeva, & Usmanova, 2018; Kanar & Bouckenooghe, 2021);

– extracurricular activities of students of artistic and aesthetic orientation (Peiser & Stanley, 2020).

Despite the significant contribution made by the works of the above-mentioned scientists to the study of the issue of a teacher's readiness to work in an inclusive education, it should be noted that the influence of extracurricular educational activities in higher education on the development of a future teacher's psychological readiness to work in such an education has not been disclosed yet. Extracurricular educational activities at the university forms and means, the teacher's work directions aimed at development of readiness have not been identified, and their impact on the development of future teachers' positive attitude to inclusive education, tolerance and personal creativity has not been studied.

### **Methodology**

Following fundamental theoretical and methodological principles of our work should be mentioned.

First, the methodology of our research is based on the education concept by Academician Slastenin (2020), who considers humanistic education to be focused on an individual's harmonious development which results in a motivational and value attitude to the surrounding reality, and a humanistic orientation of beliefs, actions, lifestyle, worldview; as well as following the principle of priority of education as "the foundation of a teacher's professional training which corresponds to his or her personal professional, both theoretical and practical training" (p.82).

The essential methodological foundation of the study is based on domestic and foreign experience of extracurricular educational activities at higher education institutions. At the same time, we consider extracurricular educational activities as a part of a future teacher's education, taking into account such features as: freedom of choosing students participation forms and degree, non-inclusion of such activities into the curriculum, a combination of an independent activity and initiative in cooperation with a teacher (Zalyubovskaya, 2013), balance of the teaching and general humanitarian environment of the university; inclusion of the general humanitarian, cultural potential of the city and region (Sorokopud, 2011), a combination of internal motivation and deep attention (Larson, 2000); real problems solving through long-term participation and intensive efforts (Hund & Bueno, 2015), focusing on creating conditions for a humanistic-oriented future teacher formation (Petruneva, 2006).

Secondly, domestic and foreign teachers and psychologists' studies reflect scientific insight on the concepts of "inclusive education" and "psychological readiness for activity".

Having analyzed the definitions in normative legal documents and in scientific sources (Alehina, 2012; Melnik, 2013), we consider "inclusive education" as a process of coeducation and upbringing of pupils with different educational needs, including children with disabilities, which is aimed at children's personal development.

Our interpretation of the concept of "a future teacher's psychological readiness to work in inclusive education" is based on the ideas of Uznadze (2001), Olport (2002), psychologists' Dyachenko and Kandybovich (1976) perspective on psychological readiness for activity, indicating the distinction between two concepts: temporary readiness (defined as the intent to perform actions at the moment) and long-term readiness (defined as a complex psychological education, acting constantly and being an essential prerequisite for the success of the activity).

Based on the above we conclude that "a future teacher's psychological readiness to work in inclusive education" is a constant integral personal education that ensures the activity success and appears in future teachers' desire and ability to educate and nurture pupils in inclusive education.

The inclusive education study results (Alehina, 2012; Melnik, 2013; Krischler et al., 2019), nature of teachers' work in inclusive education (Goneev, 2016; De Boer et al., 2011; Bukamal, 2018), our notion of "psychological readiness to work in inclusive education" suggests that it is a relationship of knowledge about inclusive education and disabled children mental developmental characteristics, the motives of studying at a university and a desire to achieve success in teaching in inclusive education, an ability to organize pupils in inclusive education, emotional intelligence and a positive attitude to inclusive education, communicative tolerance, personal creativity.

In accordance with a theoretical understanding of the key concepts of our research, the above-mentioned components may be the main criteria for the future teacher's psychological readiness to work in inclusive education.

Third, we focus on a system-synergetic approach [there is a concept of "order parameters" (key variables) in synergies that determine all other variables dynamics, everything important in the system], according to which (Knyazeva & Kurdyumov, 1992), we consider it possible to use data on separate empirically controlled criteria as a criterion for a teacher's readiness to work in inclusive education. Other freedom degrees are adjusted to these key variables. These criteria in our experimental work are knowledge about the substance of inclusive education and peculiarities of disabled children mental development, a desire to achieve success in teaching in inclusive education, a positive attitude to inclusive education, tolerance and personal creativity.

The study was conducted at Samara State University of Social Sciences and Education with the second and third - year students of "Music education", "Fine Arts", "Cultural education" departments specializing in "Pedagogical education". The sample consisted of 90 students. Participation was voluntary.

Empirical research methods were used in experimental work including the questionnaire "Inclusive education" (Smolyar & Chernomyrdina, 2019), Boyko test (cited in Fetiskin, Kozlov, & Manuylov, 2002), Tunik technique (Tunik, 2002). Diagnostics was carried out at the ascertaining stage of the experimental work (before the forming stage) and at the control stage (after the forming stage). The following tasks were set at each diagnosis stage: the initial level of future students' psychological readiness to work in inclusive education was evaluated at the ascertaining stage; the impact of extracurricular educational activities on future teachers' readiness was assessed at the control stage. The obtained data were analyzed statistically. We used methods of mathematical and statistical analysis of data such as Wilcoxon T-test to determine changes in the same group of subjects at different stages of the experiment, and the Fisher's  $\varphi$  \* test to estimate percentages statistical significance

## **Results**

Here, we shall present the results of diagnostics to determine the level of readiness to work in inclusive education criteria (attitude to inclusive education, tolerance, personal creativity), which were correlated with future teachers' psychological readiness to work in inclusive education.

Tolerance and its various behavioral signs were evaluated by Boyko test (Fetiskin et al., 2002). Tolerance is a person's attitude to people, showing the degree of acceptance of unpleasant or unacceptable mental states, qualities, and actions of an interaction partner. According to the test, tolerance is studied through the opposite – intolerance; therefore, the higher the score, the lower the level of communicative tolerance. The maximum (135) indicates absolute intolerance to others. The highest score for a particular behavioral trait (possible score for each trait is from 0 to 15) indicates the subject's lowest tolerance to people in this aspect of relations. On the contrary, the lower the score for a particular behavioral trait is, the higher the level of tolerance will be. Having compared different stages of the experiment results, we noted that the average intolerance level had declined from 56.4 to 47.9 after the educational experiment. The intolerance average in various aspects of public relations can be seen in figure 1.

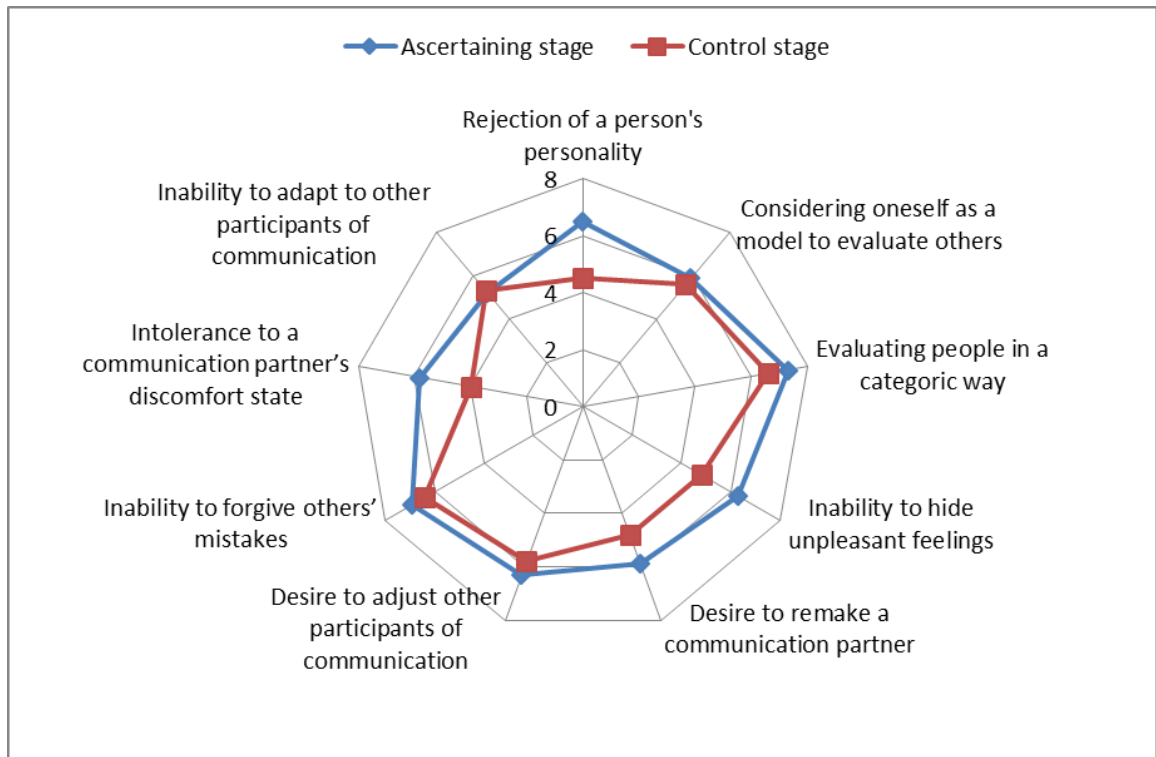


Figure 1. Intolerance average in various aspects of public relations at the ascertaining and control stages of research

The results presented in figure 1 indicate that the average of intolerance in various aspects of public relationships decreased after the educational experiment. The difference in students' tolerance general level and its individual behavioral signs at the experiment ascertaining and control stages was checked by Wilcoxon T-test. The obtained data mathematical processing results indicate that the difference in general level of tolerance and individual behavioral signs is statistically significant. Significant differences ( $p < 0.01$ ) were identified in tolerance general level and in such aspects of relationship as individuality acceptance and understanding, the ability to hide and smooth out unpleasant feelings, tolerance to a communication partner's discomfort state.

The level of creativity was studied using the Tunik methodology "Personal creativity diagnostics" (Tunik, 2002). The method determines personal creativity and four indicators of a creative personality: curiosity, imagination, an ability to take risks and an ability to understand difficult situations.

The criterion signs of curiosity are a desire to explore new objects, to find various ways to solve the problem, to learn as much as possible; imagination is marked by an ability to come up with or imagine the unusual, a capacity to be surprised by various ideas and events; an ability to understand complex situations, to take an interest in complex objects and phenomena, perseverance in achieving goals; risk-taking is characterized by an ability to defend one's ideas, a desire to set lofty goals and achieve them, an ability to take risks when achieving goals.

The analysis of results obtained at different stages of the study suggest that the average of creativity overall level increased to 60.5 (the average at the ascertaining stage was 53.4). The average values for each creativity indicator are shown in figure 2.

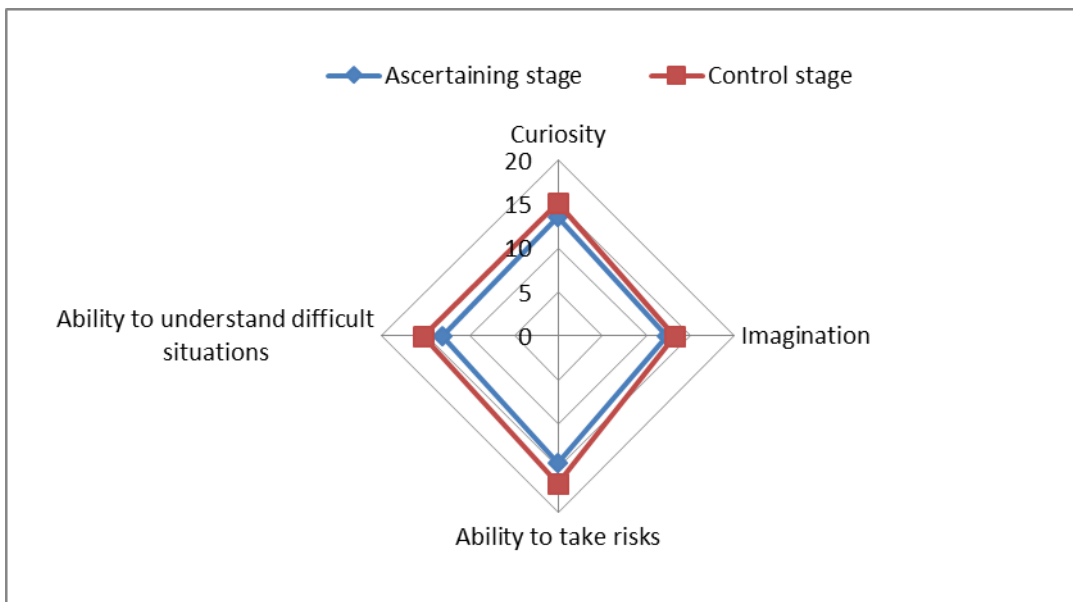


Figure 2. Creativity indicators average values at the ascertaining and control stages of research

Comparison of data obtained at the ascertaining and control stages of the study allows to establish that the average of creativity overall level and individual indicators has become higher. Certain individual indicators of creativity increased by 2.3 (the "Ability to understand difficult situations" indicator). The increase in the level of creativity and its indicators were confirmed at a statistically significant level (it was measured by Wilcoxon T-test). Significant differences ( $p \leq 0.01$ ) were identified in creativity overall level and individual indicators.



The author's questionnaire "Inclusive education", based on an interpretation of the concept "future teachers' psychological readiness to work in inclusive education" was used to evaluate the listed criteria of psychological readiness to work in inclusive education and to determine the future teachers' attitude to inclusive education.

The readiness criteria level is obvious through students' answers to the questionnaire analysis, which indicates that a future teacher deals positively with inclusive education, is ready to interact with children with different educational needs. Also he or she has a desire to undergo special training for working in inclusive education and is sure that it is possible to develop disabled children's creativity and has a desire to do it.

Most students (65.85%) do not feel positive about the inclusive education at the study ascertaining stage. Students' responses often show negative or neutral attitude to teaching in inclusive education and a need to train before work in these conditions. Most students are confident that it is impossible to develop the disabled children's creativity and do not want to do it in their future pedagogical activity.

The results of diagnostics, carried out after the educational experiment, show that the number of students having negative attitude towards inclusive education has decreased from 65.85% to 2.44%. At the same time, the number of students regarding it positively increased to 46.34%. They know that the advantages of inclusive education are equal rights to education; encouraging tolerance among all participants of the educational process, an opportunity for children with disabilities to adapt to society. The students' responses indicated both a positive attitude to the phenomenon of inclusive education, and their confidence in ability to develop the disabled children's creativity, naming various art and education forms, a teacher's personality as a means of its development.

It is established that a future teacher's positive attitude to inclusive education, tolerance and personal creativity development are influenced by specially selected forms, means and directions of extracurricular educational activities at the university.

## **Discussion**

The study proves that extracurricular educational activity at the university is a powerful resource for the development of a future teacher's psychological readiness to work in inclusive education. However, a future teacher's psychological readiness to work in such conditions should be understood as a constant integral personal entity, ensuring the activity success, manifested in future teachers' desire and ability to educate and develop pupils in inclusive education.

Taking into account the research of domestic and foreign colleagues, we considered extracurricular educational activities at the university as an interaction of teachers and students, carried out outside the educational process in order to develop the student's personality as a subject of future professional activity (humanistic and professional orientation, relevant professional skills, an ability to self-improve and self-educate).

The interaction of teachers and students within extracurricular educational activities is based on current trends of pedagogical science in the field of inclusive education. Students become a part of inclusive practice of educational institutions of the city, region, and country. Students' participation in competitions "Inclusive education is education for all" (on the basis of the Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University, etc.), festivals (a regional festival "On Wings of Hope" in Novokuibyshevsk), the annual City forum on the problems of co-education and upbringing of differently-abled children "Upbringing of the Heart" (Samara), cultural events (charity concerts, collective viewing of performances, etc.) promoted positive emotional attitude to professional activities in inclusive education development. This is evidenced not only by the results described above, but also by students' drawings, articles, essays.

Another attractive form of extracurricular educational activities for students is the Art Club ("We are different but we are equal"), which widely used the pedagogical potential of art: appropriately selected works of art (films "Butterfly Circus", directed by Weigel, 2009; "My Left Foot", directed by Sheridan, 1989; "Anton is right here", directed by Arkus, 2012), feature films ("Just Imagine!", directed by Jakimowski, 2013; "The Other Sister", directed by Marshall, 1999) and documentaries ("Music in the land of the Deaf", directed by Kostin, 2006; "Seven notes of hope", directed by A. Zhukov, 2007). Recourse to the means of art pedagogy as a field of scientific and pedagogical knowledge, including art-pedagogical methods (appeal to cinema, fiction, means of artistic expression, means of artistic influence in the work of the Art Club, in the process of personal training) promotes positive attitude towards children and inclusive education as well as the belief in disabled children's creativity development.

Art pedagogy, various forms of education, personal trainings promote future teacher's creativity development. Special exercises in personal training were done through complex work on emotions, behaviour, and constructive interaction. This has been consistently inspiring interest in studying children with special needs; development of imagination; an ability to find different ways to solve existing situations and to understand complex situations; a desire to set high goals and achieve them.

It is determined that participation in creative art groups (choral, vocal, instrumental, poetic, theatrical, etc.) plays a special role in extracurricular educational activities of a future teacher.

Traditionally, students, members of creative art groups organize meetings with teachers and pupils of inclusive education institutions, such as special needs schools, and organize artistic and creative activities for these pupils. Such forms of extracurricular educational activities promote tolerance to disabled children and personal creativity and curiosity, imagination, an ability to take risks and develop in difficult situations, an interest in complex objects and phenomena of pedagogical reality, a desire to organize artistic and creative activities jointly with pupils at special needs schools.

The artistic and creative activities with pupils at special needs schools are aimed both at shaping the experience of interaction with disabled children and future teachers' awareness of the activity's importance in development of such children.

### **Conclusion**

The obtained results confirm applicability of various extracurricular educational activities forms and means focused on development of students' experience of artistic and creative activities organization for pupils at institutions of inclusive education, as well as on students' interaction with disabled children, on future teachers' awareness of artistic and aesthetic activities importance in development of such children, which promotes a positive attitude to inclusive education, tolerance and personal creativity of future teachers.

The conducted research allows us to conclude that extracurricular educational activities in higher education institutions are a powerful resource for developing the future teacher's psychological readiness to work in inclusive education when:

- extracurricular educational activity is understood as an interaction of teachers and students outside the educational process which forms the student's personality as a subject of a future professional activity;
- a variety of forms and means in extracurricular educational activities (an art club, a festival, personal training, participation in creative art groups, organization of artistic and creative activities with disabled schools pupils, involving students in cultural events, art pedagogy means) is used to implement the main directions of such activities at the university;
- the educational process is updated in compliance with the current trends of pedagogical science in the field of inclusive education and conditions for the development of students' positive attitude to such education, tolerance and personal creativity of students are created;
- students' education social and pedagogical infrastructure is expanded through educational institutions of the city, region, country participation in the inclusive environment;

– the educational potential of art and students' artistic abilities and creativity are applied, works of art appropriate for education are included into extracurricular educational activities.

The research results can be useful for the studies of the development of future teachers' readiness to work in inclusive environment, the university educational work plans and work programs implementation.

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